McLaren Vale is home to some of the oldest producing vines in the world and along with the rest of South Australia remains free from phylloxera.

McLaren Vale is widely recognised as Australia’s greenest wine region because of its ongoing water use efficiency and commitment to environmental sustainability and a rich wine and food culture (ISO14001 sustainability qualification for the region is being sought).

History
The colony of South Australia was founded in 1836, and it was only a few years after this that settlers planted their first vines to the south of Adelaide, and in doing so established McLaren Vale.

The first records of vines in McLaren Vale date from 1840 when Hopcroft and Cornock planted small vineyards. John Reynell established his property in 1838, planting vines shortly thereafter and harvesting the state’s first commercial vintage in 1842. Today his original property is the head office of Accolade Wines including the original house, gardens and cellar and his legacy is captured by Reynella, a suburb within the City of Onkaparinga.

Around 1855 George Manning of Manning Farm planted a vineyard on land north of McLaren Vale. Five years later prominent medical practitioner, Dr Alexander Kelly, saw the Manning vineyard and was impressed with the growth of the vines. Within 12 months Dr Kelly had persuaded seven of Adelaide’s wealthiest people to form a company, and they bought land near McLaren Vale and established the Tintara vineyard. Dr Kelly and his family moved to Tintara in 1861 and in 1862 the first vines were planted, by 1867 the vines bore fruit and produced a burgundy type wine.

Thomas Hardy is acclaimed as the father of the South Australian wine industry, and when Hardy bought Tintara in 1876, his enterprise and passion established the wine industries one of the most historically significant periods in South Australian wine history. Other wineries were soon established - Ryecroft in 1884, Tatachilla in 1887, Amery in 1891, Pirramimma, Katunga and The Wattles in 1892, and Wirra Wirra in 1893.

At that time, McLaren Vale wineries made heavy, dry table wines in the style required by the bulk wine merchants and exporters in the nineteenth century. By the turn of the twentieth century, there was a shift towards making fortified wines.

Between 1920 and 1930, exports trebled and finally, after World War II, local sales picked up.

In the 1950s wineries like Seaview, d’Arenberg and Tatachilla began bottling small parcels of selected wines and established tasting and cellar door sales. In the 1960s and 70s the region began to blossom as a wine and tourism destination.

Today the McLaren Vale wine industry is a major producer of premium wines in its own right, especially premium red varieties.
Climate
The McLaren Vale wine region is roughly triangular in shape and bordered on its three sides by Adelaide, the capital of South Australia to the north, the Mt Lofty Ranges to the east and south, and Gulf St Vincent to the west.

The last two factors play a very important role in moderating the climate of McLaren Vale and are largely responsible for many of the meso and micro climatic differences experienced within the region.

Elevation in the region peaks at about 350 metres along the Sellicks foothills and Chandlers Hill, but the majority of vineyards are located on gently undulating to flat land between 50 metres and 150 metres. The climate is characterised by warm summers, moderate winters, winter-dominated rainfall, low relative humidity and relatively high evaporation.

Wind is a significant factor within the McLaren Vale region. There are two distinct and completely separate wind sources within the region: gully winds which blow east-west down through the foothills, and sea breezes blowing south-north up through Gulf St Vincent. Significant local differences are experienced within close proximity to each other throughout the region. Average annual rainfall is 506 millimetres.

Harvest
Harvest in McLaren Vale can begin as early as late January/early February in early ripening varieties such as Chardonnay and is usually completed by the end of April.

Elevation and the climatic factors most likely to impact harvest. As a general rule, harvest dates get later in a north-easterly direction.

Soil
McLaren Vale soils are diverse and can change within very short distances. There is a wide variety of soil types, a reflection of the varied terrain; red brown sandy loams, grey brown loamy sands with yellow clay sub-soils interspersed with lime, distinctly sandy soils and patches of red or black friable loams are all to be found. As the long-standing and intensive viticulture attests, the soils in the region are well suited to grape growing.

McLaren Vale has been at the forefront of best practice in terms of soil surveying and as such this diversity is very well understood.

Water
McLaren Vale has been an industry leader with respect to water conservation. Uptake and use of moisture monitoring technology for making informed irrigation management decisions is stronger in McLaren Vale than in any other wine region. There are three main sources of water in McLaren Vale which are important to irrigated grape production.

Traditionally, the main sources have been groundwater aquifers in the Willunga Basin and surface catchment dams, where water is collected and stored from natural run-off. Recently, a third resource has been utilised in the area: treated reclaimed water which is piped into the region from waste water treatment plants in the area.

The use of recycled water is very important to the sustainability of natural water resources as it takes significant pressure off the natural groundwater. Sprinkler or flood irrigation has not been used in McLaren Vale for over 25 years.
Varieties

Shiraz: It produces a densely coloured, richly flavoured wine that quickly develops a velvety texture. McLaren Vale Shiraz is known the world over for its quality and its seductive style.

Cabernet Sauvignon: The wines are full bodied and rich, often with a touch of dark chocolate intermixed with blackcurrant. The tannins are plentiful but soft, and the wines have structure for aging.

Grenache: This variety has enjoyed a renaissance during the last decade. The older plantings produce incredibly richly flavoured wines. One would be hard pressed to find a variety more ideally suited to McLaren Vale than Grenache and many old vine vineyards still exist.

Mataro (Mourvedre): Has a long history in the region although few old vine plantings remain. Interest in this variety has certainly increased in recent times due to its ability to withstand dry, warm conditions.

Emerging varieties: The diversity of so called ‘emerging varieties’ continues to grow around the potential varieties such as Vermentino, Barbera, Montepulciano, Fiano, Nero d’Avola and Tempranillo.

The top 10 varieties planted and their contribution to wine production are shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variety</th>
<th>Total Area (ha)</th>
<th>% of the Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shiraz</td>
<td>3,837.26</td>
<td>51.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabernet Sauvignon</td>
<td>1,295.37</td>
<td>17.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chardonnay</td>
<td>511.62</td>
<td>6.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenache</td>
<td>434.29</td>
<td>6.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merlot</td>
<td>257.5</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sauvignon Blanc</td>
<td>106.23</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viognier</td>
<td>73.51</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mataro (Mourvedre)</td>
<td>73.09</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semillon</td>
<td>71.92</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinot Noir</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The climate is Mediterranean and characterised by warm summers, moderate winters, winter-dominated rainfall, low relative humidity and relatively high evaporation.
embracing alternative farming practices, sustainability has led many growers to become passionate growers and winemakers. McLaren Vale are progressive and diverse thanks to a community of innovative and passionate growers and winemakers.

Over the last 10 years, the growers of McLaren Vale have invested over $2 million in levies through the McLaren Vale Grape and Wine Association to dramatically improve their viticultural practices, fruit quality and financial viability. This funding has been used to develop local seminars, alerts for growers, continuous improvement programmes, as well as many other initiatives. Viticulture and winemaking practices in the McLaren Vale are progressive and diverse thanks to a community of innovative and passionate growers and winemakers.

The emphasis on the environment and the community has led many growers to embrace alternative farming practices, improve traditional approaches, invest in reclaimed water for irrigation and take the opportunity to be involved in the McLaren Vale Sustainable Wine Growing Program, providing information and support for continuous improvement.

The McLaren Vale Grape and Wine Association support the grape growers and winemakers in the region through its Industry Development Plan which facilitates projects in the areas of:

• Environmental management
• Soil and water management
• Pest and disease management
• Grower and winemaker communication and extension.

These areas benefit the environment and the grower/winemaker by providing up-to-date research and development information through workshops and grower information sessions, facilitating links and providing opportunities for growers and winemakers to interact with organisations such as the Australian Grape & Wine Authority, the Australian Wine Research Institute, the South Australian Research and Development Institute and the University of Adelaide.

McLaren Vale Sustainable Wine Growing Australia

McLaren Vale Sustainable Wine Growing Australia (MVSWGGA) uses a combination of data reporting and online self-assessment of viticultural practices along with third party audits.

The content is written by local growers and peer-reviewed by experts from across Australia.

In 2013 MVSWGGA members produced more than half of the total amount of grapes in the McLaren Vale region. About 55% of the region’s red grapes come from MVSWGGA growers, and members represent almost 40% of the area in the region. Growers participating in MVSWGGA self-assess areas of their vineyard operation, including soil health, nutrition and fertiliser management; pest and disease management; biodiversity management; water management; waste management; economic management and social relations.

The 2013 results for McLaren Vale Sustainable Wine Growing Australia were provided at mclarenvale.info

The online system has been developed to provide growers with comprehensive detailed and real-time reports to compare their own results across years, compare their results against a peer average, track their improvements and gain access to self-education on specific topics.

The work done as part of this program highlights the opportunities provided by the McLaren Vale region for application of viticulture practices to grape growing and wine production elsewhere in the world.

Government support initiatives

There are two Government initiatives which support the sustainability of the region for viticulture and agriculture.

The McLaren Vale Sustainable Wine Growing Program aims to provide a globally recognised branding for the area’s food, wine and tourism industries.

The Character Preservation (McLaren Vale) Act 2012 recognises and protects the scenic and tourism attributes of the district.

The vision is to conserve the unique qualities of the area, which comprises McLaren Vale, the Adelaide Hills and the Barossa Valley. The listing aims to preserve the character of the district and to protect its status as a working, growing, changing landscape. The Councils involved consider that the listing would provide a globally recognised branding for the area’s food, wine and tourism industries.

The following character values of the district are recognised in the Act:

- the scenic and tourism attributes of the district
- the heritage attributes of the district
- the built form of the townships as they relate to the district
- the viticultural, agricultural and associated industries of the district
- the scenic and tourism attributes of the district
- the unique qualities of the area, as a working agricultural landscape
- the prominence of the existing viticultural, agricultural and tourism industries.

The goal of the listing is to conserve the unique qualities of the area, which comprises McLaren Vale, the Adelaide Hills and the Barossa Valley. The listing aims to preserve the character of the district and to protect its status as a working, growing, changing landscape. The Councils involved consider that the listing would provide a globally recognised branding for the area’s food, wine and tourism industries.
McLaren Vale Grape Wine and Tourism Association

McLaren Vale Grape Wine and Tourism Association represent more than 700 businesses within McLaren Vale. It is funded by members, sponsors and fundraising activities and is governed by a board of twelve volunteer directors. The board is led by Chairman Tom Harvey who is the Director of Chalk Hill Wines, McLaren Vale. The Association has six employees who provide marketing, industry development, sustainability and advocacy functions.

The association plays a crucial role in securing the region’s economic and environmental sustainability. Its key objectives are to:
1. Build brand McLaren Vale
2. Enhance profitability and sustainability of member businesses
3. Increase consumer awareness of the McLaren Vale experience
4. Enhance trade and industry awareness of McLaren Vale product
5. Maintain the region’s aesthetic and environmental assets.

The association plays a crucial role in securing the region’s economic and environmental sustainability. Its key objectives are to:

Case study - Gemtree-Taifeng Group joint venture

Gemtree Vineyards (www.gemtreewines.com) is a South Australian family-owned wine company based in McLaren Vale. Gemtree owns 330 acres of prime vineyard with varieties such as Shiraz, Tempranillo, Sangiovese, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Petit Verdot, Sauvignon and Verdelho.

The head office for the Taifeng Group is in Chengdu in the Sichuan Province. It has a development strategy of leading with international mining development to drive the development of real estate, industrial manufacturing and other downstream industries.

A joint venture between Gemtree Vineyards and Taifeng Group was finalised in March 2013 and has resulted in an inflow of capital to Gemtree of $10 million with a further commitment of $30 million over the next five years. Gemtree turnover has doubled, a winery facility has been purchased and stock holdings have increased significantly to accommodate future off take into the China market.

Taifeng is establishing a national branch and cellar door network in China to execute its sale strategy and a significant Gemtree brand campaign is underway.

The local Gemtree operation has grown from 10 employees to 25 in just over a year. Gemtree International Company Ltd in China employs around 300 and this is expected to double by the end of 2014.

The attraction of Gemtree to China is their organic branding – they achieved Australian certification in 2011 and are about to receive certification from the Chinese Organic Food Certification Centre, the first Australian winery to do so.

OppORTUNITIES

Vineyards (including house on vineyards - over $1 million)

There are various vineyards for sale, typically offering quality fruit and sustainable water practices. A sample of current and recent opportunities is:

- Lot 201 Ronald Road Blewit Springs; Brookmans Vineyard 200 ha/$200,000 income pa $1.69 million (Southgate)
- Lot 94 Blewit Springs Road, 30 acres vineyard and home site to build 57C $1.08 million (Southgate)
- Willunga Prime Vineyard; 16.5 ha/40.7 acre shiraz vineyard producing 120t pa $1.30 million (Southgate)
- Lot 15 Whiting Road McLaren Vale 21.2ha/52.4 acre vineyard with home site $1.25 million (First National)
- Lot 80 Bellevue Drive McLaren Vale 18.5 acre vineyard with established home $1.25 million (First National)
- Lot 722 Brookman Road Kurup - 62.3ha/154.6 acre agriculture/viticulture with ample water and power (Raine & Horne)
CONTACT

If you have any further queries and would like to find out more, please direct your enquiries to:
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